

Death and despair, it's Robin Gibb!

ROBIN GIBB, most successful ex-member to date of the no longer existent Bee Gees, now has his first solo album released—"Robin's Reign," written and produced by himself.

If you bought "Saved By The Bell" you'll have some idea of the contents, for, with a couple of exceptions, all the tracks are in the same vein as that hit single. Sad numbers, filled with gloom and despair, telling of lost love or death.

Musical format is much the same throughout—plenty of strings, muted brass and churchy organ, with Robin multiple tracking to produce some very effective choral backing. The whole album seems influenced by church music—"Lord Bless Them All" could easily be a hymn, and is accompanied only by a humming organ and choir.

Somewhat predictable, but it does have two very stirring tracks—"Farmer Ferdinand Hudson" and "Mother And Jack" which make the album worthwhile.

A good first album, but Robin will have to vary his style more if he wishes to avoid becoming stale. (Polydor.) ★ ★ ★

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ROBIN GIBB: sad songs



ESTHER OFARIM: sings beautifully



LITTLE RICHARD: knock-out

the new LPs

Dudley Moore on piano and flautist Harold McNair. Very restful; a singer easy to pigeon-hole, but no less acceptable for that. (CBS.) ★ ★ ★

ALAN HAVEN is a fine organist who does fresh, inventive and original things to "Norwegian Wood," "Exodus" and "What The World Needs Now Is Love," plus other excellent tunes, on a fine album for all instrumental enthusiasts, "Haven For Sale." (CBS.) ★ ★ ★

THE Happy Day Choir, an American group, try to do something new with great songs like "California Dreamin'," "Hey Jude," "Son Of A Preacher Man," "Mrs. Robinson" and "Oh Happy Day" on their album "Good Feelings." But their sound is synthetic, doesn't project a scrap of soul which is obviously what they're trying for, and the whole

collection is just plain awful. The sound is so thin all the way. (Stateside.) ★

CREEPY JOHN THOMAS is his name, and also the title of his immensely likeable album, which blends some neat, gutsy guitar work with robust vocals. Unhackneyed songs, too, in the soul idiom, including "Do I Figure In Your Life," "One Way Track Blues" and a delightful story, "Trippin' Like A Dog And Rockin' Like A Bitch." Great for blues or beat lovers. (RCA.) ★ ★ ★

DALE HAWKINS is a country-based singer whose new album is titled on the places he recorded it: "L.A., Memphis And Tyler, Texas." Rather a remote method of communication, but the contents are quite good, with favourites like "Hound Dog" and "Ruby" (current Kenny Rogers

hit) mixed with less familiar material. He sings well, the guitar and harmonica accompaniments are hot and swinging. Nice. (Bell.) ★ ★ ★

KINGSTON TRIO is a really nice part of pop history: all soft or raunchy guitars, beautifully blending voices, and good songs. "Once Upon A Time," a two-volume "memorial" LP, marks the natural end of the group—"Born in 1957, brought to fame in 1958 and voluntarily ended in 1967 because it was time," as the sleeve says. Ranging from "Greenback Dollar" and "Hard Travellin'" to "Where Have All The Flowers Gone" and "Early Morning Rain"; from "Babe You've Been On My Mind" by Dylan to "Colours" by Donovan, this is the definitive work of a fine trio who "did their thing" with a great deal less fuss than some others, and more successfully, too. A "must" for the serious pop student or collector. (Polydor.) ★ ★ ★

JOAN BAEZ's latest LP is dedicated to her husband and the thousands of other Americans who have refused to serve in the armed forces. "David's Album" features her pure voice on clear "message" songs like "Green Green Grass Of Home," "If I Knew," "Just A Closer Walk With Thee" and "Poor Wayfaring Stranger." No doubt the lady is sincere, but it's somehow rather thin as entertainment. (Vanguard.) ★ ★

ESTHER OFARIM may have disappointed many dedicated followers by having that gorgeous slinky hair cut, but if it's any consolation she still sings beautifully as ever. "Esther Ofarim" is the title of her first solo LP, re-

corded in three countries to prove her internationality. Two Leonard Cohen songs—"You Know Who I Am" and "Bird On The Wire," Ringo's "Don't Pass Me By" and Mason Williams' "Saturday Night At The World" are the familiar songs, and she sings in Spanish and Hebrew. But the best track is the blues standard, "God Bless The Child," immortalised by Billie Holiday. (Philips) ★ ★ ★

GOLDEN EARRING is a British group with a fairly "traditional" line-up of guitarists and drummer who double on vocals and other instruments. "Eight Miles High" is the LP title, and this great song takes up one whole side—unnecessarily long, but still good. The four tracks on side one are a better guide to the group's talent, and they show up quite well, despite a slightly old-fashioned "beat era" sound. (Major Minor.) ★ ★

AUDIENCE show themselves to be good versatile musicians on their LP "Audience." Howard Alexander Werth plays guitar and has an interesting voice. Keith Gemmell's flute, sax and clarinet add a lot of character—there's some lovely jazzy sax on "Banquet." The group don't seem hindered by any musical barriers, and this album of their own compositions contains a lot of worthwhile material. Deserves to do well. (Polydor.) ★ ★ ★

TASTE'S "On The Boards" is a springboard for the talents of Rory Gallagher—who takes the vocals, plays effective lead guitar, harmonica and alto-sax. But John Wilson (drums), and bassist Richard McGracken are not, fortunately, completely overshadowed. Most of the material is jazz-blues orientated, and it's clever and exciting. (Polydor.) ★ ★ ★



Brown: casual

Brown minus brass

MR. JAMES BROWN (as he's billed on the sleeve) takes things easy on "Gettin' Down To It," and works with only the bass, piano and drums backing of the De Felice Trio—apparently one of America's foremost jazz trios. Once you get over hearing him without the big band sound, you might like his casual approach and new treatments of "Cold Sweat," "Strangers In The Night," and "Time After Time." But Brown's voice seems out of place without the tight sax and thundering bass behind it. (Polydor.) ★ ★